

Ruff

1 Sep 1984

Hendrickson Marsh, Story Co., IA

*Martsching,*B./*M. Proescholdt

IBL 54:114; 55:57, Martsching 1986

Record Number: 84-28

Classification: A-D

DOCUMENTATIONS

Mark Proescholdt

Beth Proescholdt

Paul Martsching

REFERENCES

Field Reports: IBL 54:114

Records Committee: IBL 55:57

Martsching, P. 1986. Ruff in Story County. IBL 56:64.

VOTE: 4-II, 3-III (counted as II, as no one discounted any of the documentations/tk)

II, Puzzling that tail marks differ in 2 descriptions.

II, Excellent descriptions, diagnostic.

III, Well described. Not hard to identify in juvenal plumage.

III, I wonder how many of these we'll see now that we know they're here.

Martsching, P. 1986. Ruff in Story County. Iowa Bird Life
86:64.

RUFF IN STORY COUNTY

PAUL MARTSCHING



On the afternoon of 1 September 1984 I was birding Hendrickson Marsh. Along the south side I met Mark Proescholdt; he told me that there was a large sandpiper among the Pectoral Sandpipers on the west shore. My first impression of the bird was 'giant pectoral.' It was one-third longer than the largest pectoral and had a more erect posture. The bird preened for 15 minutes while standing in shallow water along a mud flat. The legs were dull green. The bill was dark and shaped and proportioned to the head like a pectoral's bill. The scaly back was composed of dark brown feathers with light brown edges. The breast was light gray-brown fading to white on the belly. The light gray-brown head had fine dark streaks from the base of the bill to the top of the head and fading down the back of the neck. I flushed the bird; as it landed going straight away from me, I saw a distinct white V on the rump pointing down the tail. Back at the car, a perusal of field guides (Peterson 1980, Robbins, Bruun, and Zim 1966) seemed to confirm my impression of Ruff, but both field guides mentioned large white ovals on either side of the tail. This was somewhat discouraging in light of the distinct white V I had seen. As I prepared to return for another look, Hank Zaletel arrived. We could not relocate the bird. We met Mark and Beth Proescholdt on the way out and looked at their field guide (National Geographic Society 1983) which stated "In flight (page 139), U-shaped white band on rump is distinctive in all plumages." Mark and Beth found the bird again, but only one observer found it the next day, late in the day. This is the third Iowa record for Ruff. One of the others was also a juvenile and found in September; the other was a spring female (Dinsmore et al., 1984, *Iowa Birds*).

1120 Marston, Ames, IA 50010

What species? Ruff How many? 1Location? Hendrickson's Marsh, Story Co.Type of habitat? Long area of exposed mud flats along edge of waterWhen? date(s): Sept. 1, 1984 time: 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
7:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. - about 10 minutes totalWho? your name and address: Mark Proescholdt, Liscomb, Iowaothers with you: alone from 12:00-3:00 p.m.; Beth Proescholdt in eveningothers before or after you: Paul Martsching, Ames, from 3:30 p.m. - 6:30 p.m. approximately

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

I noticed a large shorebird along the water's edge with many other shorebirds around it. This bird was quite a bit larger than three Wilson's Phalaropes right beside it and almost twice as large as some pectoral sandpipers near it. This bird had a deep rich, brownish color on its back. It had a long straight bill that was just barely downturned at its tip. Its breast was unstreaked and it was buffy brown from the throat to the belly. It was white underneath from the belly to the tail. Its legs were light grayish in color. It had a slightly browner cap on its head than the brown on the back of its neck. It seemed rather long-legged. It was in the water and at the water's edge. When preening, it turned its head and lots of white showed in its tail. The bird had an erect stance.

In the evening we saw it fly 3-4 times past us. Its legs were extended beyond the tip of the tail. Large white oval patches at the base of the tail were very evident. It had white on the underside of its wings.

Similar species and how eliminated: I thought possibly a willet at first from its large size and having a straight bill. It was not gray but a deep, rich brownish color. When flushed, it did not have the striking black-and-white wing pattern.

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions: give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment:

afternoon - Direct sunlight behind me and on the bird. 30-40 yards estimated.
evening - cloudy. 30-40 yards estimated.
used Bushnell Spacemaster II scope with 22x wide angle lens and 7x35 Binoculars.

Previous experience with species and similar ones:

None

References and persons consulted before writing description: Robbins' Birds of North America, R.T. Peterson's Field guide to the Birds, Natl. Geographic's Birds of North America, Iowa Birds by Dinsmore, et al.

How long before field notes made? while viewing bird this form completed? Sept. 2, 1984

MAIL TO: T. H. Kent, Field Reports Editor, 211 Richards Street, Iowa City IA 52240

What species? Ruff How many? 1Location? Hendrickson's Marsh, Story CountyType of habitat? mud flats at edge of lakeWhen? date(s): September 1, 1984 time: ^{from} 7:00 P.M. to 8:00 P.M., about 10 minutes _{total}Who? your name and address: Beth Proescholdtothers with you: Mark Proescholdtothers before or after you: Mark saw it earlier in P.M., and did Paul Martschning

Describe the bird(s) including only what you observed. Include size, shape, details of all parts (bill, eye, head, neck, back, wing, tail, throat, breast, belly, under tail, legs, feet). Also mention voice and behavior.

This large brown shorebird on the mud flats near the water was slightly larger than the Killdeer near it, and much larger than the Pectoral Sandpiper (a large one) that it superficially resembled. As it walked it showed an erect posture, a plump body, a fairly long neck, and a stout dark bill. It had a scaly dark-brown back, with a brown cap on its small head, a grayish-buff throat & breast that was unstreaked (although at times I could see very faint barring on its upper sides) a white belly and gray-beige legs. It flew 3 or 4 times, returning to the same spot, except for the last time. In flight long oval white spots were visible on each side of the dark central stripe of the tail, with its legs extended beyond the tail. We concluded that it could be nothing but a ~~Ruff~~ Ruff - an astonishing sighting!

Similar species and how eliminated: Willet, by its size & stout bill but willet is larger, & gray instead of brown & doesn't have a willet's wing pattern when flying ^{this bird}

Did any one disagree or have reservations about identification? No

If yes, explain:

Viewing conditions; give lighting, distance (how measured), and optical equipment: light from sides back, cloudy, approx. 40 yards, binoculars and Bushnell Spacemaster scope 22xPrevious experience with species and similar ones: Never a Ruff - Willets oftenReferences and persons consulted before writing description: guides of Peterson, Robbins, National Geographic - talked with Mark + Paul MartschningHow long before field notes made? at once this form completed? Sept. 4

BIRDS: VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION OF AN EXTRAORDINARY SIGHT RECORD.

1. Species Ruff [NB see reverse side - msl] 2. Number: one
3. Location Hendricksons Marsh, Story County, Iowa
4. Date: 1 September 1984 5. Time Bird ^{approx:} seen: 4:30 to 5 pm
6. Description of size, shape and color-pattern (describe in great detail all parts of the plumage, and beak and feet coloration, in addition, to the diagnostic characteristics, but include only what actually was seen in the field): from a distance had the general appearance of a giant Pectoral Sandpiper. Closer observation showed: General pectoral shape - about 3 inches longer than the biggest Pectorals nearby. legs light greenish-gray; no eye ring or eye brow line; head, neck & breast grayish buff; narrow brown 'cap' or 'wide streak' on top of head - with very fine streaks from this down back of neck. back & shoulder feathers dark brown with light or buffy edges; wings & tail ended together when standing; beak - dark & rather like Pectoral's in shape & proportion to head. Standing a bit more upright or erect than Pectoral. I scared it up & when it landed going straight away - saw a white inverted V (pointing down tail toward end); tail
7. Description of voice, if heard: dark; slight trace of light wing stripe in flight. belly lighter than breast.
not heard
8. Description of behavior: preening (facing me) first 15 minutes; spent rest of time just standing in the shallow water till I scared it up & it flew a little way.
9. Habitat - general: lake & marsh
specific: in shallow water at edge of mud flats
10. Similarly appearing species which are eliminated by questions 6, 7 & 8, Explain: size eliminates all the smaller sandpipers; beak length eliminates nearly all the large birds. Greater Yellowlegs has yellow legs, longer bill, more gray & white coloration. Upland sandpiper is streaky-speckled below. Golden Plover has no white pattern above in flight. Black-bellied plover doesn't have the very distinctive inverted V pattern this bird had.
11. Distance (how measured)? 40 ft at closest 12. Optical equipment: 7 x 35 & 20 x 80 binoculars
13. Light (sky, light on bird, position of sun in relation to bird and you): clear mostly clear; bird to north, then east, then south of me as I walked north along edge of lake.
14. Previous experience with this species and similarly appearing species: never seen before
15. Other observers: Mark & Beth Proesholdt
16. Did the others agree with your identification? yes
17. Other observers who independently identified this bird:
18. Books, illustrations and advice consulted, and how did these influence this description:
A field Guide to the Birds Peterson
Birds of North America Golden Press
National Geographic Field Guide see back please:

19. How long after observing this bird did you first write this description? I wrote my notes while watching this bird; I certainly didn't know what it was at the time.

Signature Carl Martsch Address: 1120 Marston
Date: 5 Sept 1984 City, State: Ames, Iowa

I knew it was something I'd never seen before & I didn't know (over) what field wants to look for.

I'd been looking around the eastern end of Hendrichsons' Marsh & ~~going~~^{was} going along the road on the south side when I met Mark Proesholdt. He told me about the Buff-breasted Sandpiper on the west end and also among the Pectoral Sandpipers a bigger bird. He didn't know what it was. So I went around & found the Buff-breasted, then the bigger bird. After taking quite a few notes - not having any idea what it was, & so not knowing what ~~like~~ field marks to look for (Ruff did cross my mind - but I certainly didn't have any idea what marks to look for, for a Ruff as I'd never expected to see one) - I deliberately scared it up hoping for some distinctive wing or tail pattern that might prove helpful. The inverted white V stood out from the dark tail & back as the bird landed again. I figured with all my notes that should be enuf. The picture of the Ruff in A Field Guide to the Birds shur looked like this bird, but the flying picture showed a big white spot on each side of the tail. Likewise the Birds of North America said white oval patches on each side of base of tail. I was perturbed because none of the pictures of any of the shorebirds showed the distinct white inverted V I'd seen. I decided to put my boots back on & wade out thru the weeds again to see if I could find it. I didn't, but on my way ~~back~~^{leaving} met Hank Zalatel who'd gotten a phone call from Mark Proesholdt saying on the basis of his notes his mother, Beth Proesholdt, that he'd seen a Ruff, and that they were coming to Hendricksons. I went back ~~out~~ with Hank, but we didn't see the Ruff (or the Buff breasted either). As we headed back to leave, Mark & Beth came. I looked at their National Geographic book & it plainly showed the white inverted V I'd seen. At any rate I left satisfied that I'd indeed seen a Ruff. I asked Mark to call me if they saw it again & were convinced it was or was not a Ruff. Later that evening Mark called & said they'd seen it several times, & were convinced it was a Ruff.



I keep these books in my car.